

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 49

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2379

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE, CI

SUBJ: CEYLONSE REACTION TO CHILEAN COUP

REF COLOMBO 2308

1. LIKE PM'S STATEMENT REPORTED REFTEL, ENSUING CEYLONSE REACTION TO CHILEAN EVENTS HAS BEEN QUITE TAME AND CONFINED MOSTLY TO WRITTEN STATEMENTS BY LEFTIST LEADERS, LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, AND POLITICAL PARTIES, PUBLISHED IN LOCAL PRESS. FINMIN PERERA (CONSIDERED LOCAL EXPERT ON CHILE SINCE HIS TRIP THERE IN 1972) ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENT IN WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED ALLENDE'S DOWNFALL TO HIS PUSHING SOCIALISM TOO FAST AND TOO HARD. AS RESULT, HIS REGIME SUCCUMBED TO MIGHT OF ARMED FORCES, BACKED BY REACTIONARY FORCES AND BANKROLLED BY ITT AND OTHER CAPITALISTS. ACCORDING TO PERERA, SO ENDED REVOLUTIONARY PRESIDENT WHO "HAD COURAGE TO STAND UP TO MIGHT OF YANKEE IMPERIALISM". STATEMENT ASKS LEFTISTS IN SRI LANKA TO TAKE NOTE AND TO TEMPER RADICAL MEASURES TO LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS OF PEOPLE.

2. JOINT COMMITTEE OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS (JCTUO), COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF UNITED FRONT LABOR UNIONS, CALLED PUBLIC MEETING TO PROTEST CHILEAN EVENTS EVENING OF 20 SEPT. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORT, MEETING WAS ADDRESSED BY TRADE MINISTER T.B. ILANGARATNE (SLFP), PLANTATIONS MINISTER COLVIN

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DESILVA (LSSP), HOUSING MINISTER PIETER KEUNEMAN (CP/M),

AND OTHER LEFTIST MINISTERS AND TRADE UNION LEADERS.
SPEECHES MADE MUCH OF ALLEGED AMERICAN BACKING FOR COUP.
JCTUO PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BEFORE MEETING CALLED ON CEYLONSE
TO STAND GUARD "AGAINST ANY SUCH POSSIBLE CIA CONSPIRACIES IN
OUR COUNTRY."

3. SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORPORATION BROADCAST PANEL DIS-
CUSSION FOLLOWNG HYDE PARK MEETING, WITH INDUSTRIES MINISTER
T.B. SUBASINGHE (SLFP) ACTING FINMIN BERNARD SOYSA (LSSP),
AND PIETER KEUNEMAN AS PANEL MEMBERS. DISCUSSION FOLLOWED
SAME LINES AS EARLIER MEETING BUT COMMENTS WERE MUCH MORE
CIRCUMSPECT REGARDING AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT.

4. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CEYLON DAILY NEWS WAS ONLY MORNING
ENGLISH NEWSPAPER TO CARRY REPORT OF JCTUO MEETING AND STORY
WAS BURIED INSIDE. ALTHOUGH DAILY NEWS CALLED MEETING "MAMMOTH
RALLY", USIS LOCAL EMPLOYEE WHO WENT TO GATHERING REPORTS
THAT ONLY ABOUT 300 PERSONS WERE PRESENT, MAKING THIS ONE OF
MOST POORLY ATTENDED MEETINGS IN HISTORY OF COLOMBO'S HYDE
PARK CORNER. WE ALSO HAD RUMORS THAT DEMONSTRATION AGAINST EMBASSY
MIGHT BE PLANNED IN CONJUNCTION WITH JCTUO MEETING, BUT
NOTHING MATERIALIZED.

5. ONLY A FEW CEYLONSE HAVE RAISED QUESTION OF US INVOLVE-
MENT WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS. APPARENT LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST,
IN SPITE OF DETERMINED EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY BY MARXISTS, TO
EXPLOIT ISSUE AGAINST UNITED STATES AND OTHER "REACTIONARIES",
IS PROBABLY DUE TO CURRENT PREOCCUPATION WITH FOOD SHORTAGES, DROUGHT

AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. SPLIT IN CP/M (COLOMBO 2311) HAS ALSO
HELPED TO FOCUS ATTENTION ELSEWHERE.

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY WAS INITIALLY HANDICAPPED IN EFFECTIVELY
REFUTING ALLEGATIONS OF US INVOLVEMENT IN CHILEAN COUP BY LACK
OF PROMPT COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT US NON-INVOLVEMENT.
IN IMMEDIATE POST-COUP PERIOD, WE WERE COMPELLED TO RELY ON
SEPARATE STATEMENTS BY WHITE HOUSE, STATE DEPT AND DEFENSE
SPOKESMAN DEALING WITH ONLY CERTAIN ASPECTS OF CHARGES AGAINST
US. IT WAS NOT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER COUP THAT WE RECEIVED
VALUABLE, DETAILED TESTIMONY OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY KUBISCH.
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USIS RELEASE OF HIS COMMENTS WAS CARRIED BY SUN AND DAILY
MIRROR BUT NOT BY GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CEYLON DAILY NEWS.
VAN HOLLEN

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